

Options or COAs for Sri Lanka Air Force basically are no different than for the Army or the Navy.

1. To become an 'air farce'!
2. An expeditionary air force that has bold pilots, who can match or surpass the bravery and innovative tactics of the Argentinean pilots in the Falklands war!

To be an expeditionary air force, SLAF has to do what I have described from 1 to 7 under Sri Lanka army in addition to the following.

1. Flying training in high altitude, rugged mountainous terrain or hot, dusty deserts terrain with or without night vision goggles.
2. High risk SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resist and Escape) training.

As SLAF was there in the 2005 Pakistani earth quake disaster relief it could have gone to Haiti if GOSL had worked out a package deal. It is GOSL's duty to talk to friendly countries and declare its intentions through the best diplomats and get aircraft for Sri Lanka pilots to train on and use them in a future natural or man-made disaster anywhere in the world. I am sure SLAF would be the obvious choice when it comes to flying 'piece' any country would make given SLAF's pilots' vast combat experience proven beyond doubt. Why does not GOSL or SLAF make hay while the sun shines?

d. Special Task Force: STF is an elite outfit with two unique skill sets in one commando; an advanced infantry man and a peace officer or law enforcement officer in one piece or one body. I fail to understand this; when GOSL send troops on UN missions to places like Haiti why, at least, one Company strength of STF is not included. For one they equally helped to defeat the LTTE and deserve overseas tours for change, experience, exposure and money, secondly but more importantly when Sri Lankan troops have a brush with law, at least STF, with law enforcement experience, can 'coach' them on how to give a 'statement' thus saving a national disgrace or embarrassment, like reported carnal knowledge by Sri Lankan troops in Haiti, a few years ago.

Majority in Sri Lanka is under the erroneous impression that STF was successful only because LTTE was not that strong in Batticalloa or Ampara. That is total nonsense. If you know the spoils of LTTE Jeyanthan Brigade or have visited Tharavi martyrs cemetery you will get a sense of how strong LTTE was in those two districts. It was the STF's unique Tactics, Techniques and Procedures that saved the day, men and equipment. Let's be honest and for mere argument's sake only, pound for pound, who has lost more men and materials, to include arms and ammo, tanks and trucks, arty pieces and mortar launchers that LTTE managed to decamp with, or camps destroyed, top leaders killed or captured (remember, Krisnamoorthy of EROS, who was shot to death while trying to escape from AHQ, who caught him? STF, just to name a declassified secret) and lethal and non-lethal material captured from LTTE or found in their hideouts. Then you will really appreciate STF's national security missions in the east.

They were trained mainly by ex SAS (Special Air Service) and RM (Royal Marines)

commandos, these instructors have told STF troops from day one; to be reticent and professional; be good at what you do and silent about it! STF was an elite outfit until recently when it was shamelessly politicized, good and capable fighters transferred out of it and henchmen appointed and used for political purposes, as bodyguards to thug and uneducated politicians; to hunt common criminals any police station should be able to handle.

Let me give you one example: Who remembers the siege of the Kiran army camp? The famous saying associated with it? "This HIRAN will NOT leave KIRAN"-the words of Lt Col Hiran Halangoda, 1GW. This siege was unique as the LTTE for the first time mounted a gas attack or resorted to chemical warfare in the east in order to overrun it. Luckily for the Army troops they had a well dug by STF so that they could use water for survival and decontamination of eyes (with soap and warm water the simplest way of decontaminating). They were able to fight heroically for three weeks until the relief columns arrived. Kiran is situated in a very strategically important junction, the gateway to Thoppigala, Kalkudha and Vallaichchenai in the East. The Kiran camp was first occupied by STF and the bunker system that saved the lives of army troops to fight another day was constructed and developed by then IP Davulugala and his men in Kiran STF camp. The bunker and tunnel system was made in a such a manner, In case of an attack, a commando sleeping in bed could run through the tunnel system to the communication vehicle or the bunker without being exposed to enemy gun or indirect fire. That was the quality of defenses in the Kiran Camp that STF left behind for Hiran!

Word of Caution, Though: When you select units or troops for overseas assignments the only deciding factor should be merit; not because they used to in a 'Rock House'; not because they were 'two-legged' lions adored and raised by a general languishing now in a windowless room; not because they were/are the henchmen or storm troopers for politicians and of a defense secretary; I can make a president's son a flyer through back door the same way I got my son to fly; my uncle helped a future president in a finding job in Vidodaya University Library so I can get more slots for Navy etc.

It is so easy to decide which unit deserves it or the perks most; Number of LTTE camps captured or destroyed; number of top LTTE leaders killed; number of very important LTTE caches (arty pieces, suicide boats, weapon factories) found etc. So prepare a checklist of just evaluation criteria and abide by it. Do it on pure merit!

What Should Have GOSL Provided to Warfighters: I understand very well that Sri Lanka is not a rich country with limitless FOREX reserve or could afford to buy every military gadget available on the market. At least the following should have been made available to each and every soldier as they have been vital to military to survive, fight and win.

1. Combat Application Tourniquet® (C-A-T®) is a small and lightweight one-handed tourniquet that completely occludes arterial blood flow in an extremity. The C-A-T® uses a Self-Adhering Band and a Friction Adaptor Buckle to fit a wide range of extremities combined with a one-handed windlass system. The windlass uses a free moving internal band to provide true circumferential pressure to an extremity. The windlass is then locked in place; this requires only one hand, with the Windlass Clip™. The C-A-T® also has a Hook-and-Loop Windlass Strap™ for further securing of the windlass during patient transport.

This CAT sells at about \$39.99 (approximately 4550 rupees) in US but I you can make mass produce it in Sri Lanka less than 200 rupees at the most. Most importantly this cheap and simple piece of life saving equipment could have saved thousands of soldiers from death due to excessive bleeding resulted in shock. I am glad that only Lalith and his team had one CAT each on their person every time they left the 'wire', thanks to a gift from some overseas friends. By the way where has GMOA been? Why did not the GMOA alert MOD to this very simple to apply, cheap and effective piece of life saving equipment? Maybe they were fighting with the nurses over on some silly 'Break Room' space in a hospital.

2. QuikClot® Combat Gauze™ brand is the latest generation of the product, a medical gauze infused with nanoparticles of kaolin clay. It has been found to be 100 percent effective in careful testing performed at the Naval Medical Research Center. Z-Medica also markets a civilian version, QuikClot® 1st Response™, which is becoming standard equipment with emergency providers nationwide, and QuikClot® Sport™ brand and QuikClot® Sport™ Silver, which are available over the counter and becoming popular with outdoor adventurers.

Severe battlefield injuries present unique problems in stemming blood loss, which is the primary cause of combat deaths. Medics may have less than two minutes to stop blood loss before death is imminent. A QuikClot® formulation with silver ions provides enhanced clotting as well as antimicrobial properties to fight infection.

Again, this kind of gauze, a very simple, cost-effective solution that works, could have staunched the bleeding of combat casualties and the civilian casualties (LTTE human shield) on the battlefield thus saving thousands of lives. May I ask where GMOA was? Do not the members of GMOA read the latest developments in their field to be current? Shame on you medical doctors for not showing up for the valiant troops and the innocent civilians bleeding to death, in their hour of need! Instead of going on strike for a silly thing as a 'threat' from an angry man to one of their doctors, spend your time on something worthwhile or of national importance rather than being hypocrites who have taken the Socrates Oath to care for the sick and injured. Again some well wishers passed this information on to a few officers but for them being not top brass they were helpless.

3. Breathable Combat Boots: Had Lilith been wearing one on that fateful mission he would be still living with us today and will have been able to take out 'Rudrakumaran' if he would ever sneak into the island like 'Nedumaran'.

When we were undergoing military training we wore all leather artillery boots. Those are not breathable boots at all and moreover were required to spit shine them. Imagine a soldier wearing that kind of boots and fight for days in a jungle environment getting bogged down in mud and wading water from time to time. Remember the severe floods troops encountered during the final war. Imagine the foot diseases soldiers would have suffered because a government or military did not take action to mitigate it.

They could have easily provided breathable combat boots to each and every soldier, at least one pair. The money spent on a pair would have paid back multifold by saved man-hours of a warfighter lost or medical costs.

Did you ever wonder most of the time LTTE fighters were in 'slippers', did military top brass or intelligence ever wonder why? If you are a soldier wearing boots, even they are breathable boots, you need to change socks daily. Good Platoon Sergeants conduct 'Foot Inspections' on their soldiers every day. Once again, Prevention is better than cure and a platoon sergeant needs healthy soldiers to kill as many as terrorists possible.

Army Black Leather Breathable Pro Boots Developed specifically for Law Enforcement, Emergency, Military and Security Personal. The ultimate in comfort, support and durability; contains a unique Cordura 'Du Pont' fabric that is up to 7x more durable than Nylon, Polyester and cotton. Soiling system for superior comfort and durability. The unique dual density technology features: Direct moulded construction for long lasting durability. Shock absorbing polyurethane midsole to combat fatigue Hardwearing Nitrile rubber outsole. Heat resistant up to 330 degrees celcius. Multidirectional anti clog tread pattern for maximum traction. Broad base for stability Resistant to oil, acid and solvents. Completely breathable. Controls foot temperature. Rapid moisture absorption Soft Comfort feel. Superior abrasion resistance. Resists odour and mildew. Rapid drying. The open knit weave allows air to calculate and control the foot temperature and allow rapid drying of the fabric. So basically these boots are awesome and will last for years.

It was same with running shoes. We were given BATA shoes (standard issue) to wear and run. We were wondering then why soldiers were complaining of knee pain or having foot and knee problems. We had never heard of 'Plantar Fasciitis', also known as a 'heel spur'. We just ran in same type of BATA shoes for decades. Now we know the following.

Foot type refers to differences in foot structure and shape, as reflected in pronation (side-to-side tilting of the foot) during heel strike running-Neutral Pronation, Overpronation, Underpronation (supination). I have Neutral Pronation and I run in 'Cushioned' or 'Neutral' shoes (others being 'Stability' and 'Motion control' shoes).

4. LED headlamps: This low cost AAA battery operated, about 500 rupees worth, hands-free, small piece of equipment would have helped soldiers so much and made their life so easy. We never go anywhere without it. They could have it used for 'signaling' purposes.

THE WISH LIST

1. ROVER: It stands for Remotely Operated Video Enhanced Receiver, is a system which allows ground forces, such as Forward Air controllers (FAC), to see what an ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) platform (unmanned aerial vehicle-UAV) or aircraft is seeing in real time by receiving images acquired by the aircraft's sensors on a laptop on the ground. There's little time delay and usage of ROVER greatly improves the Forward Air Controller on the ground reconnaissance and target identification which are essential to Close Air Support (CAS)

Harris Corporation unveiled on 17 June 2009 ISR Video Receiver, the handheld version, known as the RF-7800T, a breakthrough portable product that delivers high-resolution full-motion tactical video to individual warfighters for real-time ISR.

Why 2SF team needs a ROVER? As an example, when LTTE Mannar leader forces Bishop of Mannar at gun point and against the wishes of the Bishop or that of populace of Mannar to relocate the statue of Our Lady of Madhu to the terrorist territory, an 2SF LRRP needs to be sure, absolutely sure that when they trigger the ambush or claymores only the terrorist leader and his bodyguards escorting or chasing the Bishop of Mannar behind, in a pick or Pajero, would be RIP! That way GOSL could save the Our Lady of Madhu from falling into terrorists hands; avoid inadvertently killing the clergy; and most importantly to avoid an outcry from the international community and providing a sensational headline for the international media for exploiting it for maximum possible profit-'A Sri Lanka Army Deep Penetration Unit Kills the Innocent 'Christian' Bishop of Mannar, and the Our Lady of Madhu Destroyed.' You can imagine the outrage all over the world from the Philippines to US, from Pope to Pat Robertson!

2. MH-6 Little Bird Helicopter, and its attack variant, the AH-6, are single-engine light helicopters used for special operations aviation in the US Army. They are manufactured by MD Helicopters, which is an aerospace company, headquartered in Mesa, AZ, USA, that produces helicopters primarily for commercial use.

If you do a search on YouTube for a MH-6 in action video clip you would see what an effective role it can play, especially in killing terrorist leaders or in snatch-and-grab operations. That is why 2SF needs them. Had 2SF had them available or at their disposal the surviving leaders, I do not name them but 2SF know who they are and are looking for them with diligence and sense of urgency, would have been spilling the beans and singing, giving GOSL an intelligence treasure trough. Then the Security Forces could have uprooted the entire network lock, stock and barrel forever.

Sri Lanka may not be able to buy AH-6 as it has been modified for 'Dark Side' US Special Operations Forces and has communication packages, counter measures and weapon systems that are classified. But GOSL will be able to buy a commercial version and use local talent to modify it. After all, if Sri Lanka were able to produce 'Arrow Boats' locally why then Sri Lankan engineers local or overseas cannot 'make it happen or reality'? They owe it to Sri Lanka at least for the life time free education and medicine they have received.

3. UAVs or ISR platforms: When it comes to UAVs and ISR platforms you cannot have enough of them. They do wonders. Believe it or not If not for them, AMZ (AQI) would still be living! They are the prime reason for the coalition forces successes in Iraq and AFPAK (Afghanistan+Pakistan). If not for them and their versatility on the battlefield the coalition forces would have wrapped up and gone home, a long time ago.

In this case too Sri Lankan techies can easily design and manufacture if given thought to and dedicated time and service. It is the duty of Sri Lankan academics, scientists and engineers to provided the best and latest to warfighter so that he can give peace and stability for you and your family to sleep good in the night. You owe it to the poor soldier who has sacrificed a lot or might pay the ultimate price!

4. Trijicon's™ Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight™ (ACOG®), self-luminous aiming systems have been battle-tested by coalition military-rightfully earning the reputation as having the most sophisticated and dependable optics on the planet.

Whether you're doing a night sweep through enemy territory, or defending an established position against multiple moving targets, you'll want to equip yourself with the brand that's now standard issue with many government agencies and military outfits the world over.

Through decades of tireless innovation and dedication, Trjicon's ACOGs have earned accolades from soldiers and officers by combining long range accuracy with instantaneous shot placement.

Though expensive at least some Special Forces and commando teams need to be provided with these ACOGs.

I know my article was long but hope you learned something you did not know; at least you know now the heroes made by the media with vested interests are not the real heroes; you know now a politician or a general alone did not win the war against the LTTE terrorists.

I leave the words of ousted US General David McKiernan in Afghanistan with you to ponder:

"The war will not be won by any one leader or one country but a collective of leaders with the support of other nations and there is no silver bullet for victory. At end of the day what counts most are one's reputation and the ability to look in the mirror and know you made decisions based on mission and taking care of troops and their families. If those are two valid criteria for self assessment then I'm OK."

"Determined, Dared, and Done"-SLA Special Forces Motto

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